

Town Meeting Colleagues:

Following the May 2<sup>nd</sup> Turf Forum co-sponsored by Arlington's Park and Recreation Commission and Conservation Commission, I found myself wondering about the possibilities for shared understanding of the issues related to the use of artificial turf. Is it possible for Town Meeting Members to consider substitute motions and/or amendments related to Article 12 with open minds and curiosity to make informed and responsible decisions that will serve the community well both in the short- and long-term?

At this point in the process, it seems important to identify points of agreement and/or shared values, discern where there may be need for clarity of information and facts, and acknowledge both broad and specific items of contention.

In an effort to clarify for myself what seem to be important starting places for debate on the use of artificial turf, I've created a list of points that reflect what I understand to be factual and/or potential areas for shared, collective understanding or perspective given the information I've reviewed to date (including the May 2<sup>nd</sup> forum, materials posted to the ATM interactive warrant, and email correspondence received on this matter). This list is in no specific order, is loosely categorized, and is not exhaustive. However, it may offer some potential common ground from which to discuss this important matter and I submit it with that intention in mind.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of my interest in centering curiosity and open-mindedness as we take up Article 12 and related submissions.

#### **VALUES**

- There are not enough fields to meet the current and anticipated future needs and interests of children, teens, and adults in Arlington.
- Residents of Arlington value highly recreational areas and open spaces for being outdoors and engaging in activities outdoors.
- Children and teens (adults too!) receive vital physical, mental health, developmental and social benefits from sports, athletics, and outdoor activities.
- Residents of Arlington value highly the protection and conservation of our environment and are concerned and proactive on the issue of climate change.

#### **PROCESS/CONDITIONS**

- Arlington has limited space for large fields.
- The Town of Arlington has not done any comprehensive study or explored all options for turning existing grass fields, or portions of them, into an artificial turf field, whether open or covered, outdoor or indoor.
- The Town of Arlington has not consistently done an adequate job of maintaining current grass fields. This has had a negative effect on the status of fields and impacts utilization of them.
- Arlington has limited financial resources and there is no current effort to conduct a comprehensive field needs assessment or assess future field needs given population changes and needs.
- There are likely to be more high-temp days, and not just during the summer months, going forward due to climate change.
- With the proposed Poet's Corner plan, there will be some aspects and/or details that the Town of Arlington will weigh in on, and, to my knowledge, some that won't be subject to Town preference or approval.
- There are various steps that need to be taken with Town approval in order for any Poet's Corner proposed plan to move forward.
- While Arlington can look to and learn from what other communities and institutions have done, it need not be a follower of others, but should do what seems appropriate and responsible for the town given the conditions, resources, and needs of the community.

## FIELD TYPE

- Compared to grass fields, artificial turf fields provide increased opportunity to play in some weather conditions (rain, for instance). Under some conditions (high temps), artificial turf may not be played on.
- The science regarding artificial turf is evolving and we need to (and can only) have access to current scientific data on the impacts of artificial turf. We cannot predict future scientific findings.
- Artificial turf fields get hotter than grass fields.
- Infill made from (tire) crumb rubber is not an ideal infill material.
- The infill is not the only material with potential environmental and/or health impacts.
- The installation of grass and artificial fields require deep excavation, drainage systems, and other site prep.
- Regular maintenance, while somewhat different in nature, must be done on artificial and grass fields.
- Artificial turf fields must be replaced about every decade.
- Disposal of artificial turf is complicated and the recycling options are limited and not ideal.
- There may be artificial turf options that are better than others, in terms of cost, environmental, and health impacts.
- It may be that there are differences in artificial turf lifespan, maintenance, environmental impacts, and health impacts depending on whether they are covered/shielded and/or in an inside facility or not, as well as how they are maintained.
- There may be more liability issues to consider with artificial turf use compared to natural grass fields.
- It may be helpful to give grass fields a rest by having an artificial turf field(s) available.
- There appear to be more concerns about artificial turf over the last few years given PFAS and a growing body of scientific studies about artificial turf materials.
- Scientific findings on the environmental and health impacts of artificial turf are complicated to sort out given the various methodologies used and limitations of studies.
- There are environmental and health risks to all types of fields. Acknowledging, understanding, assessing, and considering the risks is critical to decision-making regarding artificial turf. It seems important to recognize that how people approach risk personally, for themselves and their families, may be distinct from how risk might be considered for a community.